



DEALING WITH EXAM ANXIETY

Deep breathing

When you become anxious, your breathing becomes shallow and fast. Breathing slowly and deeply can help calm your mind and body so you are able to deal with stressful situations.

When you use deep breathing for focus and concentration, you increase the airflow into your body, allowing more oxygen to enter your bloodstream. In response to this, the sympathetic nervous system in your brain – which triggers feelings of anxiety – becomes quieter.

How do I do it?

Sit comfortably with a straight back.

Place your left hand on your chest, and right hand below it, on your diaphragm.

Inhale deeply through your nose for 5 seconds.

Hold your breath for 2 seconds.

Exhale slowly through your mouth. Feel the expansion in your diaphragm.

Repeat for 1 or 2 minutes until you feel calm.

Using this technique enables you to control anxiety with deep breathing. Yoga or mindfulness classes may also help.

LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

NHS:

www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/help-your-child-beat-exam-stress

Mentally Healthy Schools:

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/factors-that-impact-mental-health/school-based-risk-factors/academic-and-exam-stress>

Student Minds:

www.studentminds.org.uk/examstress

BBC Bitesize – Revision guide:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zn3497h#zq2nf82>

SAFEGUARDING CONTACTS

Designated Safeguarding Leads:

Miss Tanya Cornish - KS3

Mrs Frances Tiernan-Powell - KS4 & KS5

Deputy Safeguarding Lead: Miss Anne Kelly

Telephone: 01795 424223

Email: safeguarding@highsted.kent.sch.uk

Website: www.highsted.kent.sch.uk/safeguarding

Children's Social Services:

Day: 03000 41 11 11 or Night: 03000 41 91 91



HIGHSTED GRAMMAR SCHOOL

MANAGING EXAM STRESS 2023 - 2024

At Highsted, we are aware that exams can potentially heighten feelings of anxiety and stress amongst young people. It is important to understand that whilst students are encouraged to work hard and succeed, it should not be at the expense of their wellbeing.

People react to stress in different ways. For some students stress can be a great motivator, giving them the 'get up and go' that they need to succeed. Other students are indifferent to stress; they can float along without getting affected by stress in a good or bad way. There are also many students who will struggle with stress when exam pressures become overwhelming.

The key things to remember are that:

- stress is nothing to be scared of
- anxiety is not inevitable
- you can learn how to cope more effectively

This leaflet aims to highlight a range of advice and guidance available for students and parents to help alleviate or lessen the anxiety they may have about sitting exams.

SIGNS OF STRESS

Signs of academic stress can sometimes be difficult to identify. Students may not want to talk about stress they are experiencing.

Students who are affected by anxiety and stress about tests and school work may:

- Complain of physical health problems (e.g. stomach aches, headaches etc.).
- Not be sleeping or eating properly.
- Have mood changes, such as being tearful, angry or withdrawn.
- Be reluctant to attend school or talk about tests and exams.
- Spend too much time on their work or alternatively avoid schoolwork.
- Be overly self-critical of themselves and of any mistakes they make.
- Become obsessive in the way they work – unwilling or unable to break off.

Having someone to talk to about their work can help. Support from a parent, tutor or study buddy can help young people share their worries and keep things in perspective.

Encourage your child to talk to a member of school staff who they feel is supportive. If you think your child is not coping, it may also be helpful for you to talk to their teachers.

Try to involve your child as much as possible.

STRUCTURE YOUR REVISION

Knowing where and how to start revision is the biggest hurdle to overcome for many students.

One of the most effective ways to build confidence about taking exams, overcome any nervousness about starting revision, and manage any worry about taking exams, is to structure revision.

A good way to manage this is to:

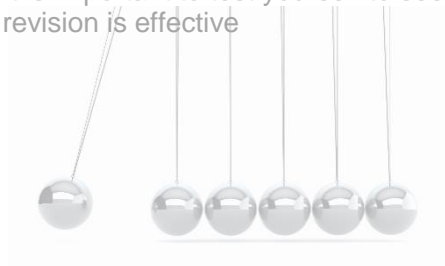
Create a revision plan. Break down everything you need to revise into small topics and just revise one topic at a time. By creating a plan, you are taking control.

Set targets. Identify when you are going to revise each topic. Give yourself a time limit for when to complete each topic.

Check progress. Check your progress and set yourself a new time limit if necessary. Once you've met a target, set yourself a new one.

Keep it in perspective and remember:

- Targets should be achievable and manageable
- Targets must be short term and include a time limit
- Review your targets, and when complete, set new ones
- It is important to test yourself to see if your revision is effective



TOP WELLBEING TIPS

It is important to look after your wellbeing during the exam period. These habits will help you concentrate as well as reduce stress:

Take frequent breaks. *Psychologists say we can only concentrate properly for 30-45 minutes. You could use a technique like Pomodoro, that helps you to take regular breaks. Try and get away from your desk.*

Eat well. *Try to get a good balance of food groups to avoid highs and lows of energy.*

Drink lots of water. *People often underestimate how much hydration helps!*

Think about when and where you work best. *Not everyone is a morning person and some people don't find the library a productive place to work. Do what works for you.*

Keep active. *Exercising is one of the quickest and most effective ways to de-stress. Even a short walk will do. Fresh air will help clear your head and perk you up.*

Get enough sleep. *Try to get about 8 hours' sleep a night. Avoid energy drinks and caffeine if you have trouble sleeping.*

Don't leave revision until the last minute and try to cram it in – working that way is never going to be productive.

Schedule in free time and protect this time. *Nobody can work all day every day.*